

Amendments to the Claims:

Please add new claim 71. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously presented) A method for referring patients to practitioners, said method comprising:

certifying a group of practitioners to perform a medical procedure;
identifying individual patients who wish to receive the procedure;
accessing an electronic database having information comprising a number of procedures performed by each of the group of certified practitioners; and
providing to the identified individual patients a list of certified practitioners, selected from the electronic database, wherein those practitioners who have performed more procedures than others of the practitioners are placed preferentially on the list.

2. (Original) A method as in claim 1, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises training practitioners.

3. (Original) A method as in claim 1 or 2, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises testing the practitioners.

4. (Original) A method as in claim 1 or 2, wherein certifying comprises requiring that the practitioners have performed at least one procedure.

5. (Original) A method as in claim 1, further comprising removing practitioners from the certified group.

6. (Original) A method as in claim 1, wherein the practitioners are placed into tiers based on the number of procedures performed and wherein practitioners from higher tiers are preferentially placed on lists.

7. (Original) A method as in claim 6, wherein the individual practitioners are randomly ordered within a tier.

8. (Original) A method as in claim 6 or 7, wherein each tier is defined by a threshold number of procedures performed over a selected period of time.

9. (Original) A method as in claims 6 or 7, wherein each tier is defined by the aggregate number of procedures performed.

10. (Original) A method as in claim 6, wherein the practitioners are assigned to at least three tiers.

11. (Original) A method as in claim 10, wherein the practitioners are assigned to an initial tier when they become certified, to an intermediate tier when they treat a first threshold number of patients over a preselected time period, and to a higher tier when they treat a second threshold number of patients over the preselected time period.

12. (Original) A method as in claim 1, wherein identifying individual patients comprises collecting names and contact information from individual patients.

13. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 12, wherein at least some of the individual patients contact a coordinator in response to solicitations.

14. (Previously presented) A method for referring patients to dental practitioners, said method comprising:

certifying dental practitioners to perform a dental procedure;
informing a potential patient population of the availability of the procedure;
identifying individual patients who wish to receive the procedure;
accessing an electronic database having information comprising performance criteria for each of the group of certified dental practitioners; and
providing to the identified individual patients referral lists of certified practitioners, selected from the electronic database, wherein individual practitioners are preferentially placed on the referral lists based on one or more performance criteria.

15. (Original) A method as in claim 14, wherein the performance criteria include the number of dental procedures performed over a preselected time period.

16. (Original) A method as in claim 14 or 15, wherein the performance criteria include data relating to successful patient outcomes.

17. (Original) A method as in claim 14, wherein informing comprises soliciting patients.

18. (Original) A method as in claim 17, wherein soliciting comprises advertising in print and/or electronic media.

19. (Original) A method as in claim 14, wherein certifying the dental practitioners comprises training the dental practitioners.

20. (Original) A method as in claim 14 or 19, wherein certifying the dental practitioners comprises testing the dental practitioners.

21. (Original) A method as in claim 14 or 19, wherein certifying comprises requiring that the dental practitioners have performed at least one procedure.

22. (Original) A method as in claim 14, further comprising removing dental practitioners from the certified group.

23. (Original) A method as in claim 15, wherein the dental practitioners are placed into tiers based on the number of procedures performed and wherein the tiers are arranged in order on the list.

24. (Original) A method as in claim 23, wherein the individual dental practitioners are randomly ordered within a tier.

25. (Original) A method as in claim 23, wherein the dental practitioners are assigned to at least three tiers.

26. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 23, 24, or 25, wherein each tier is defined by a threshold number of procedures performed over a selected period of time.

27. (Previously presented) A method as in claim 23, 24, or 25, wherein each tier is defined by an aggregate number of procedures performed.

28. (Original) A method as in claim 25, wherein the dental practitioners are assigned to an initial tier when they become certified, to an intermediate tier when they treat a first threshold number of patients over a preselected time period, and to a higher tier when they treat a second threshold number of patients over the preselected time period.

29. (Original) A method as in claim 14, wherein identifying individual patients comprises collecting names and contact information from individual patients who contact a coordinator.

30. (Original) A method as in claim 29, wherein at least some of the individual patients contact a referral center who produces the referral list in response to solicitations from the coordinator.

31-45. (Canceled)

46. (Previously presented) A method for maintaining a referral directory, said method comprising:

certifying practitioners to perform a medical procedure;
tracking a number of times each certified practitioner performs the procedure; and
maintaining a patient referral directory in an electronic database having information comprising the number of times each certified practitioner has performed the procedure, wherein certified practitioners selected from the electronic database are prioritized on a list based on the number of times each certified practitioner has performed the procedure.

47. (Original) A method as in claim 46, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises training practitioners.

48. (Original) A method as in claim 46 or 47, wherein certifying the practitioners comprises testing the practitioners.

49. (Original) A method as in claim 46 or 47, wherein certifying comprises requiring that the practitioners have performed at least one procedure.

50. (Original) A method as in claim 46, further comprising removing practitioners from the certified group.

51. (Original) A method as in claim 46, wherein tracking comprises determining the number of times a practitioner acquires a kit to perform the procedure on a patient.

52. (Original) A method as in claim 46, further comprising dividing the directory based on geographic location.

53. (Original) A method as in claim 52, wherein the list is divided into at least two tiers with practitioners who have performed more than a first threshold number of procedures being in a higher tier.

54. (Original) A method as in claim 53, wherein the list is divided into at least three tiers with practitioners who have performed more than a first threshold number of procedures being in a higher tier, those who have performed more than a second threshold number but less than the first being in a lower tier, and those who have performed less than the second threshold number being in a still lower tier.

55. (Previously presented) A method as in any of claims 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, or 54, wherein the number of times the procedure is performed is measured periodically over a fixed time interval and the directory periodically updated.

56. (Previously presented) A method as in any of claims 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, or 54, wherein the practitioners are not ordered within a tier.

57. (Previously presented) A method as in any of claims 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, or 54, wherein the practitioners are further ranked within each tier based on the number of procedures performed.

58. (Original) A method as in claim 46, wherein the directory is maintained in an electronic database.

59. (Original) A method as in claim 58, further comprising generating a referral list for an individual patient from the patient referral directory, wherein the list is generated automatically from the electronic database based on the patient's geographic location and wherein practitioners with a higher priority have an increased likelihood of appearing on any referral list.

60-70. (Canceled)

71. (New) A method for referring patients to dental practitioners, the method comprising:

certifying dental practitioners to perform a dental procedure, the procedure comprising prescribing a plurality of successive aligners, each successive aligner having a different geometry selected to move teeth toward a desired position;

identifying individual patients who wish to receive the procedure;

accessing an electronic database having information comprising a number of procedures performed by each of the group of certified practitioners; and

providing to the identified individual patients a list of certified practitioners, selected from the electronic database, wherein those practitioners who have performed more procedures than others of the practitioners are placed preferentially on the list.